

Fr Bernard Digal, age 45, was attacked by Hindu fundamentalists in Orissa, India., and died on 28 October in hospital of severe head wounds. Fr Bernard is the first Catholic priest to die as a result of the campaign of anti-Christian violence

Fr Otto Messmer and Fr Victor Betancourt, two Jesuit priests, were found lifeless on 28 October in their rooms in Moscow. The gunman was arrested and confessed. Fr Messmer, a Russian citizen, was born in 1961 and since 2002 served as Superior of the Independent Region of Russia of the Society of Jesus. Fr Betancourt, a theology professor, was born in 1966 in Ecuador.

Boduin Ntamenya, 52 years old, of Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, was killed on 15 December when his vehicle was attacked by four armed men. Boduin worked for the Italian NGO, AVSI, looking after emergency education in a war zone. He leaves behind his wife and 6 children.

Please pray those who lost their lives in mission last year.

A Prayer for Missionaries

We adore you, Jesus our Shepherd and Savior. And we praise and thank you for your living among us. We ask you to walk beside your missionaries as they seek to proclaim your Gospel. Cherish, guide, and strengthen them; help them to be patient when they meet frustrations, and encourage them when they are disappointed. Lead

them, we beseech you, along the path you desire for them. For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen

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To All Who have Shed Their Blood to Proclaim Christ to the World

Requiem en pacem

Around the world, many priests and religious are martyred for their faith.

Martyrdom (Greek for "witness") is certainly not new to the Church. Other than Jesus, Eastern and western liturgical Christians revere Saint Stephen as the first martyr, or *protomartyr*.

The annual list compiled by the Congregation for Evangelization, and published by Fides News Service, includes only Church personnel, and thus does not necessarily account for all lay Catholics who die for the faith.

The list includes missionaries who knowingly accepted the risks of serving in areas where violence can occur, even if their deaths might be attributed to accidents or ordinary crimes such as robbery.

Between 1980 - 1989 at least 115 missionaries died violently. Between 1990 - 2000 at least 604 were killed, a figure substantially higher than the previous decade as it includes the genocide in Rwanda (1994). Also, many Church personnel are included whom Pope John Paul II described as 'martyrs of charity' – sacrificing their lives rather than abandoning the people entrusted to their care. Between 2001 – 2007 173 pastoral workers have been killed. Remember them and all who are similarly tested for their faith.

Mission martyrs 2008

Fr Pedro Daniel Orellana Hidalgo, aged 50, was found dead on 6 January in his room in Caracas, Venezuela, his birthplace. His hands were bound and he had been strangled. For many years he had carried out pastoral activity in the Archdiocese of Cumana. \

Fr Jesus Reynaldo Roda, OMI, aged 55, who had been working for ten years in charge of a small mission station in Tabawan in the Philippines was shot dead on 15 January. He was attacked by a gang of 10 men while he was saying his rosary.

Fr Michael Kamau Ithondeka, Vice-Rector of the Mathias Mulumba Senior Seminary of Tindinyo, Kenya since 2005, was killed on 26 January, by a gang of armed youth in Rift Valley, site of the most intense ethnic conflict and violence. He was born near Nairobi in 1966.

Br Joseph Douet, age 62, of the Order of Christian Brothers of Saint Gabriel, was killed on 8 April in Katakou, Guinea Conakry. French-born Brother Joseph had spent 37 years in Africa. He was killed in his school, where he was alone at the time.

Br Brian Thorp, Mill Hill Missionary, was found lifeless in the parish residence in Lamu, Kenya, apparently the victim of an armed attack on the night of 9/10 April 2008. 77 year old Br Brian had been pastor there since 1999.

Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mossul for Chaldeans (Iraq), 65 years old, was kidnapped on 29 February in Mosul as he left the Church of the Holy Spirit. His body was found on 13 March. The Holy Father Benedict XVI said of him, 'May his example sustain all Iraqis of good will, Christians and Muslims, to build peaceful coexistence founded on human fraternity and mutual respect.'

Fr Mariampillai Xavier Karunaratnam, parish pastor of the church in Vannivi'laangu'lam, Sri Lanka was killed on 20 April. He will be remembered as a human rights activist and advocate of dialogue and reconciliation.

Fr Julio Cesar Mendoza Acuma, Mexican, age 33, died on 2 May in hospital in Mexico City, following attacks the night before at his home. He was the pastor of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in the Mexican capital.

Fr Johnson Moyalan, a 60 year old SDB missionary from India, was killed on 1 July in Sirsia, Nepal by a group of armed men who broke into the mission. He worked with many from the tribal communities and the so-called 'untouchables' of the area.

Fr Jaime Ossa Toro, from the Institute for Foreign Missions of Yarumal, was stabbed on 13 August in Medellin, north-eastern Colombia, where he was born in 1937. His body was found in his room, near Emmaus Church, where he had served for three years.

He was previously a missionary in Angola for 14 years.

Fr Thomas Pandippallyil, a 38 year old Indian Carmelite priest, was assassinated while celebrating Mass in a village on 16 August in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Fr Nilson José Brasileiro, 44 years old, was stabbed to death and his body found on a roadside on 24 August, in the town of Tiete, Brazil, The police arrested four men, who had kidnapped him in order to force him to hand over his bank savings.

Fr John Mark Ikpiki, Nigerian, 43 years old, was killed on 1 September, in Isiokolo, Nigeria, by attackers who took over his vehicle. Dedicated to spiritual retreats and youth work, he was also well-known as the author of catechetical material.

Fr Gerardo Manuel Miranda Avalos, 45 years old, was shot from a moving vehicle in the afternoon of 2 September, as he was entering the Mexican educational Institute 'Fray Juan de San Miguel,' of which he was Director. He died later in hospital.

Fr Samuel Francis, age 60 and lay volunteer worker **Mercy Bahadur** were found dead on 22 September in the village of Chota Rampur (northern India). Fr Samuel lived as a hermit in an 'ashram,' which became a centre for inter-religious events, especially between Christians and Hindus.